

Back to Indiana

BY ELMORE ELLIOTT PEAKE

THE rising sun had not yet drunk the dew from the grass in the doorway of the lone cabin when the man mounted the forward hub of the prairie-schooner and bent a final glance into the dusky interior to make sure that nothing had been forgotten. He inventoried the contents with his eye: a mattress for his wife, baby boy, and little Nellie to sleep on; blankets and comforters—somewhat faded and ragged—for himself and Roy to make a bunk of, on the ground; a box of extra clothing, cooking utensils, lantern, rope, shotgun, family Bible—badly shattered,—and a hen-coop, containing seven pullets, lashed to the end-gate. A wooden bucket hung from the rear axletree, to which was also chained a black and white setter. The only superfluous article seemed to be a little mahogany bureau, battered and warped, but still retaining an air of distinction which set it apart from the other tawdry furnishings, and marked it as a family treasure.

Daggett stepped to the ground again, and, folding his arms, swept his dull, faded eyes over the limitless savanna, still gray with the mists of night. Here, for five weary, heart-breaking years, he had pitted his puny arm against rebellious Nature and fought the elements on their chosen ground. He had been eaten up by grasshoppers; tossed by cyclones; alternately scorched by strange, hot winds and frozen by shrieking blizzards; desiccated by droughts and flooded by cloudbursts. His horses and cattle had sickened and died; his wife had faded and grown old in a day; one of his children had been laid under the tough, matted sod which almost turned the edge of a plough; and he, never rich, had grown poorer and poorer. It was not strange, perhaps, that he had come to look upon that vast, treeless expanse, the playground of elemental passions, as a monster lying in wait for his blood.

"The curse of God upon you, I hate you!" he burst out, with the sudden fury which the elements had taught him. But a better mood instantly following, his eyes softened with a light to which they had long been strange. "Back to God's country—back to Indiana!" he exclaimed, and laughed aloud.

Roy, his nine-year-old boy, looked up at the unusual sound; but his father had plunged into the dismantled cabin again. He returned with a can of green paint in his hand, and had soon roughly lettered the canvas wagon-top with the inspired words, on one side, "Back to God's Country"; on the other, "Back to Indiana." Then hurling the can of paint out into the sunburnt grass with all his strength, he cried, gayly, "There, grasshoppers, eat that—you fiddlin' demons that air so fond of green stuff!"

A stooped, flat-breasted woman, but with the remnants of beauty still clinging to her thin, pale face, came around the corner of the house. She, too, had been taking a last look about. A black cat alternately trotted in front of her and arched its back across her skirts.

"Rufus, I feel as if we ought to take the cat," said she, hesitatingly. "I hate to leave any living thing *here*."

"Throw him in! Always room for one more!" cried her husband, jovially.

She glanced up gratefully at his unexpected good-nature, and then took a final, solicitous look about her. Just as the prospect of quick wealth had not intoxicated her, as it had her husband, when they sold out in Indiana and started West, so the reverses they had since suffered had not sullened and hardened her. Likewise, though this home-going was filling her depleted veins with new life, she could not bubble over as Rufus and the children did. Instead, she wet her pillow with softly flowing, peaceful tears, in the stillness of the night.

"Now I must go over to Willie's

grave," said she, quietly. It was plain that this duty had been reserved for the last.

She did not ask her husband to go with her, and he did not volunteer to go. But he watched her with chastened eyes as she crossed the field to the slight rise which, for want of a better name, they had always called "the hill." The little grave was already covered with a tangle of wild roses, trumpet-vine, and prairie-grass; the headboard was gray and weather-beaten, and the rudely carved name half obliterated. Nature was claiming her own. A few summers and winters would come and go, with their beating rains and merciless freezes; and then there would be nothing, not even a little mound, to mark the spot where Willie, after spinning his brief thread of life, had been laid away. Scalding tears ran down the mother's cheeks at the thought.

"I wish it was so we could take him up and lay him with the others, back home," said she, gently, on her return.

"We'll do it sometime, mother," promised Daggett, hopefully. But she knew they never would do it; they would always be too poor.

Owing to the hard times, they had been unable to sell their farm. So they had left it in the hands of a real-estate agent, twenty miles away, who would probably fleece them out of half their dues if he ever sold the place. Their scanty furniture had brought but a pittance, and had it not been for a lucky sale of cattle they might have been unable to get away for another year. As it was, they expected to reach Indiana with practically nothing but the wagon and the span of mules which drew it. But what of that! They would be among friends; they would be in God's country—in old Indiana, where they had been born and raised.

So, buoyed up by hope, that divinest of gifts from above, they were happy. At night they camped by the roadside, tethered the mules, built a fire, and cooked supper. How sweet the smoky bacon, the johnny-cake smuttled with ashes, and the black, creamless coffee tasted! No king ever sat down to more royal fare. Then, after a brief season of talk, and a pipe for Daggett, they lay down and slept in the untainted air of

God's great out-of-doors. In the morning they arose with renewed life, fed the mules, cooked breakfast, and began another day's lap on their long journey.

Often the road was hot and dusty, between flat, barren fields. But often, again, it skirted beautiful streams for miles; and after they reached the Ozarks, it wandered through pleasant valleys, forded swift brooks, and climbed cool mountain-sides, in the shade of thick timber. Farmhouses, villages, and cities were sighted, passed, and left behind, in a slow, pleasing panorama. Beyond the Ozarks they began to see birds that they had known back in Indiana; and at sight of the first cardinal, with his breast flaming in the sunlight, Daggett stared with fascinated eyes for a moment, and then burst out: "Look at the redbird, mother! He's just like the one that used to build in our syringa-bush!" Lucy could not remember that he had ever called her attention to a bird before.

The black cat deserted them the first night out, going back home, presumably. But no ill luck ensued, as Daggett half feared it would. Not so much as a nut was lost or a strap broken. Mrs. Daggett continued to improve; the children, though as brown as Malays from dust and tan, had no ache or pain; and Daggett himself forgot to take a dyspepsia tablet for a week.

Yet their bed was not quite one of roses. Thoughts of the future, even in "God's country," occasionally touched the parents with anxiety. Also, in some places, where their dark coats of tan branded them as gipsies, they were looked upon with suspicion. Occasionally a village constable, puffed up with authority, would order them not to camp within the village limits; and sometimes a farmer, attracted by their evening fire, would warn them not to trespass for wood. Again, when the unshorn and grimy Daggett entered a store to purchase groceries or a bale of hay—occasionally the roadside pasture failed—he was now and then made to feel that his room was preferred to his trade. Yet generally they were treated with humanity; and not infrequently a farmer, seeing the children at play of an evening, would bring out milk or eggs or even a chicken to the camp.

Daggett and his wife usually sat around the fire of a night, after the children had gone to bed, and talked over their prospects. Her heart, like his, was set on getting back the old place, where four of their children had been born and two of them buried. It was only a poor little place of eighty acres, just beyond the fertile belt of Wabash bottom-land; but it was home, sweet home, and looking back to it from their exile they forgot its scanty crops and rocky soil.

"If we can't get it back, Rufus, it won't be like going home," said Lucy, one night, gazing into the fire with misty eyes. They were then in Missouri, in the eastern foot-hills of the Ozarks.

"We'll git it back, mother," said Daggett, confidently. His courage ran high these days. "Joinville Haines probably holds it yet, 'cause it ain't likely anybody would want to buy it. Leastways, they didn't seem to want to when we had it to sell. He's a good man. He ain't forgot the time I pulled him out of the crick and saved his life, when we was boys. And I reckon he ain't forgot, either, that he loved you once, Lucy," he added.

She did not answer at once, but her face grew softer. The remnant of its girlish beauty, which child-bearing, drudgery, and ill health had so sadly ravished, showed to better advantage in the soft firelight than in the glare of day.

"Maybe he *has* forgotten," she murmured. "I once feared that he was a man who might forget such things."

Daggett pushed a log farther into the fire with his boot, sending up a shower of sparks, and relit his pipe with a coal.

"Is that the reason you didn't marry him?" he asked, slyly.

She lifted her eyes to his. "I loved *you*, Rufus," said she, quietly, and smiled almost as she used to smile in the days when he had courted her.

A tenderness which had long lain dormant stirred in Daggett's bosom. In the past weeks he had realized as never before the hard life he had led her. He had not provided for her as Joinville Haines would have done. He had complained of his lot, and he had often been cross with her. To marry him she had left a home in which, humble though it was, she had never known privation. She

had slaved in his kitchen and about his house. She had borne his children, cheerfully, and with only welcome in her heart for them as they came along, in a rapid succession under which she had withered like a flower. She had bravely seen three of them lowered in the grave. She had met his fault-finding with the soft answer which turneth away wrath.

She had followed him into the West against her better judgment. For five years she had stood by his side out there, ten miles from a neighbor, twenty from a town, and forty from a railroad. She had cheered him on while he fought grasshoppers, hot winds, drought, blizzards, and his own sinking courage. Never once had she suggested going back to Indiana, though he could see that her strength was failing and her heart breaking. And when at last he had given up, bitter and defeated, she had smoothed the wrinkles from his brow, and put hope in his heart, and raised the rally-cry: "Back to God's country! Back to Indiana!"

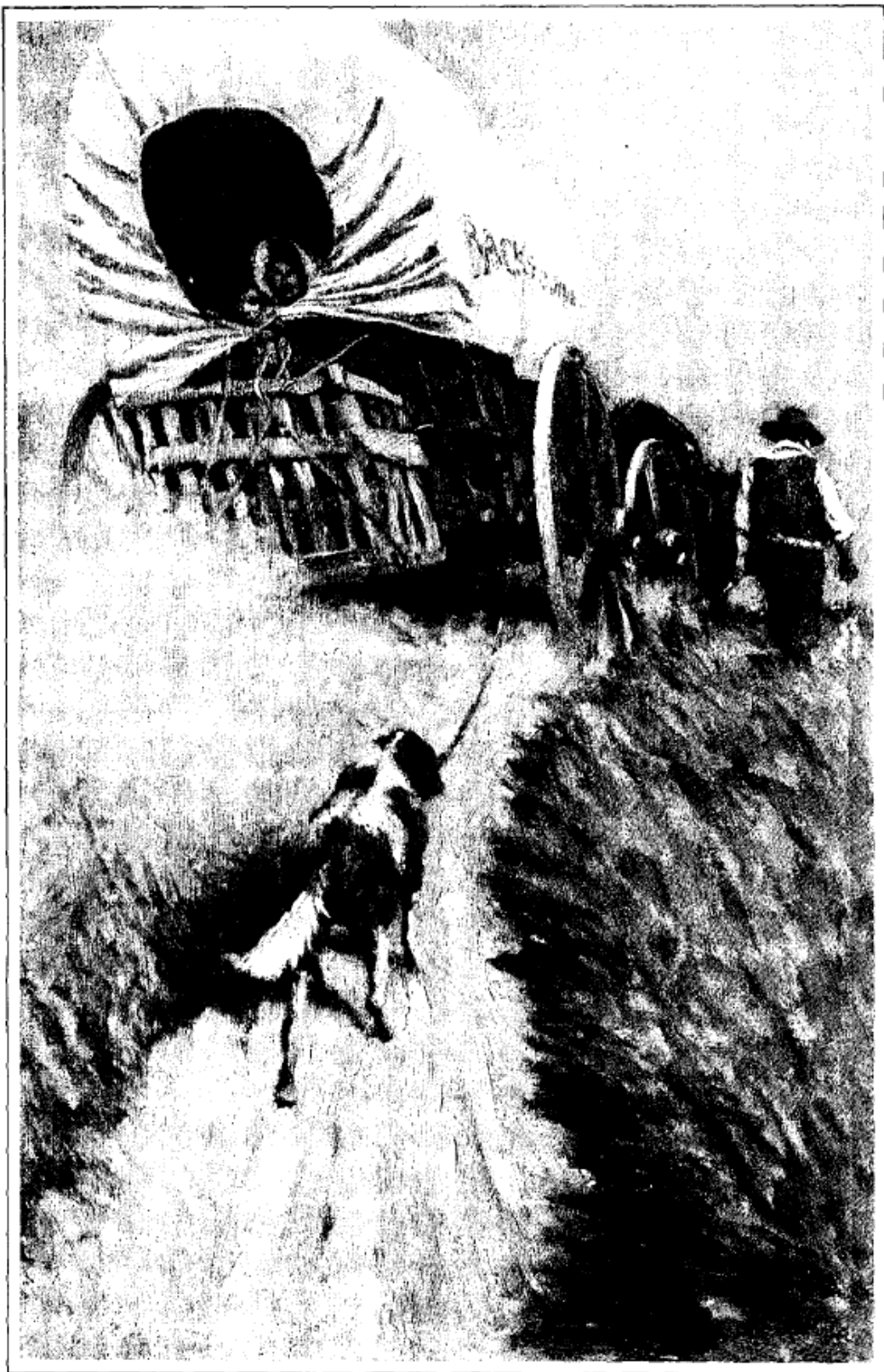
"Joinville will let us have the old place back," he repeated. "He ain't got any use for it. He knows I'll pay as I can, and he'll give me time."

"It was such a warm little house, there in the hollow," said she, huskily, contrasting it with the boxlike shell on the prairie, where the northwest gales, toothed with arctic cold, ravened like a wolf at every crevice for days at a time. "The kitchen was so cozy, too. I used to complain that it was too small, and unhandy. But I never will again—if we get it back."

Daggett's eyes glistened like a boy's. "I wonder if the honeysuckle-vine is still on the well-house. I ain't smelt honeysuckle since we left there."

She smiled at him through sudden tears. "Rufus, I used to think, out on the prairie, when I was so tired all the time, that I'd be content to die, if only the children could be provided for, and I knew that some one would put a sprig of honeysuckle in my hands after I was dead."

When he helped her into the wagon, where she slept, he retained her hand for a moment, in a half-embarrassed way. Then he kissed her. He could not recall when he had kissed her good-night be-



OFTEN THE ROAD WAS HOT AND DUSTY

fore. Nor could she, as she lay with wide-open, happy, starry eyes.

He arose the next morning with a heart strangely, blissfully light. Something was moulding the old topsyturvy, sordid world over for him again, giving it somewhat the likeness it had borne when he was a boy. As he and Roy rode along on the front seat, he said to the lad,

"Roy, do you remember the old place?"

"Yes," answered the boy, eagerly. "I remember the crick, with the bridge acrost it—and the little grove of spruce-trees, with the two tombstones—and the old barn with a basement—and a well with a chain and a bucket on each end."

"And the sweetest water in it, Roy, that man ever drunk!" added the father, jubilantly. "I ain't had my thirst rightly quenched since I left it. The first thing you and me 'll do when we drive in is to git a drink of that water—and then bring a gourdful to mother. Eh!" He laughed gayly, and clucked to the mules. "Git ep, boys, git ep! Every step is takin' you nearer to that sweet water, and you kin have some too." Once he would have sullenly struck the animals when they lagged.

At a town called Bonnetterre, in Missouri, which they passed through about five o'clock in the afternoon, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was advertised on the bill-boards for that night.

"Mother," said Daggett, with an inspiration, "I've a notion to camp on the aide of town, and take Roy and Nellie to see Uncle Tom. It's a grand show—I seen it once—and they ain't never seen a show in all their lives. It won't cost much."

The mother made no objection. So after supper Daggett and the two children set out for the "Opera-house," leaving Mrs. Daggett, four-year-old Bobbie, and Spot, the setter, in charge of the camp. It was a memorable night for the youngsters; and when Eliza fled across the floating ice in the Ohio, with her child in her arms, Roy, forgetting that it was only a play, leaped to his feet and shouted shrilly, "Oh, paw, them bounds are goin' to git her!"

But on the way home, in the midst of

the excited babble of the children, Daggett suddenly paused under a street lamp, and looked down at the diminutive pair with a sickly color overspreading his face. His pocketbook was gone! And it contained all the money he had in the world, except the change remaining from a five-dollar bill which he had broken at the box-office!

A search both along the street and in the opera-house was of no avail, and it was a heavy-hearted man who stretched himself that night beneath the prairie-schooner. There was no joking or skylarking the next morning as they hitched up the mules—no response to the birds' tuneful sunrise greetings. They were still two hundred and fifty miles from home; the last of the flour had been used for supper, and the side of bacon was almost gone.

The alternative which faced Daggett was to work, beg, or steal. His honesty was of a fibre which would not permit the last, and his rough pride balked at the second. Therefore he must work. But work was not an easy thing for a nomad like him to get; and if he did get it, it would take him some time, perhaps until cold weather, with a family and a pair of mules on his hands, to accumulate enough to last him through to Indiana. The outlook was desperate indeed.

That day their dinner consisted of stale bread—a baker had let Daggett have three loaves for a nickel—and dandelion greens boiled with the last of the bacon. Supper consisted of the same, warmed over; and little Bobbie went to bed crying for something to eat. Daggett swore, with a mighty oath, that the child should have it in the morning, cost what it might.

Two days later they crossed the Mississippi at St. Louis, on the great Eads bridge. Daggett and his wife had looked forward impatiently to the passage of this last great natural barrier between them and home, and the occasion was to have been one of thanksgiving. But the bridge toll made a cruel hole in the rapidly dwindling little store of silver in Daggett's pocket; and though the children were jubilant over the steamboats, and craned their necks to the last to see them, the parents scarcely glanced at



"IT WAS SUCH A WARM LITTLE HOUSE, THERE," SAID SHE, HUSKILY

the Father of Waters. That night Daggett announced to his wife that he had just a dollar and twenty-cents left.

"Something will turn up, husband," said she, bravely, but her lips trembled.

"What *kin* turn up?" asked he, pathetically, and she could not make answer.

They took the old St. Louis and Vincennes stage-road, running due east. Daggett mournfully recalled the exuberance with which he had passed over it five years before, going west. The second day out from St. Louis, while watering their team at a public pump, in a village whose name they did not know nor care to ask, the usual curious group gathered about them.

"Want to sell that bird-dog, mister?" inquired a bystander, who had been noting Spot's points with a critical eye.

Daggett suddenly stopped pumping. He had thought of selling his mules and buying a pair of bullocks. He had thought of selling his wagon and buying a cheaper one. He had even thought of selling the box of clothing. But until this instant his dog, blooded though he was, had no more occurred to him as an asset than one of his children had. Yet why not sell him? Better sell a dog than starve a child. With grim lips he stepped over to the inquirer, so as to get out of ear-shot of the wagon.

"I'll sell him if I kin git his price," said he, almost fiercely. "But it's one that you wouldn't care to pay, I reckon, without tryin' him, and this ain't the season for birds."

"What is your price?" asked the other, as Spot approached his master and looked up inquiringly with his soft, brown eyes. "He's got a good head."

"Twenty-five dollars," answered Daggett, resolutely.

"You don't want much!" grinned the prospective buyer.

"No, not much—for a dog like that," retorted Daggett, without the shadow of a smile.

"I like his looks," admitted the man. "He shows his breedin' all right. But all the evidence I've got of his trainin' is your word."

"That's all the evidence you've got or kin git," assented Daggett, coolly. "And it don't make a picayune's worth of dif-

ference to me whether you take it or leave it."

His bluster was working, as he perceived from beneath his drooping lids, and the other hesitated.

"If you'd asked me five dollars for that dog, pardner, I'd have refused him. I'd 'a' knowed he was a spoiled pup." He took another whiff at his pipe. "I've been tryin' for three years to get a dog just like that one. He grows on me every minute, and—I'll take him at your price," he ended, abruptly.

"Come into this store," said Daggett, in a low voice. The dog followed. "My wife and children mustn't see you take him. They'd squall their eyes out. I'm sellin' him, my friend, because I've got to—because I need the money. You see! Otherwise your common council couldn't raise enough to buy him. Tie a string around his neck—he's as gentle as a lamb—call him Spot, and, after we're out of sight, lead him home and feed him. And, my friend, treat him good. He's the best bird-dog you ever shot over."

The man wrote out a check, which the grocer cashed. Daggett pocketed the money, patted the dog on the head, and turned guiltily away from the beseeching brown eyes.

The children, lying inside the canvas, out of the hot sun, did not miss their four-footed playfellow until supper-time. Then Daggett confessed, and bowed his head before the storm of grief that burst. It was only after the young ones had sobbed themselves to sleep that Mrs. Daggett said, sympathetically, "I reckon it hurt you more than it did them, Rufus."

The next day they had butter on their bread again, but it had been purchased at too heavy an outlay of the heart's coin to be enjoyable; and when little Bobbie said with a whimper, "I'd thooner have Spot than butter," he voiced the family's sentiments.

But even the sacrifice of their pet could not long keep their spirits down, now that home was drawing near and they had the wherewithal to keep on going. The towns they passed through were becoming familiar to Daggett, by name at least, and looked like Indiana towns, he fancied. As the wagon

rumbled across the muddy Little Wabash, with its pond-lilies and willow thickets, Daggett cried out, boyishly: "By jings! it's a picture on a small scale of the old 'Bash herself; and I'll bet a cooky that if I had a hook and line I could ketch a catfish down there in three minutes!"

But when he crossed the Wabash itself, two days later, his emotions were too deep for frivolous expression. In that stream was water from Beecher's Run, and Beecher's Run crossed his old farm! How well he understood the silent tears which were coursing down Lucy's cheeks! And, oh, the rustle of that bottom-land corn! It came to his ears like some forgotten lullaby of childhood; and when a wood-pewee called pensively from a sycamore, the man lifted an illuminated face toward the little embodied voice and murmured, "God's country—old Indiana—at last!"

The prairie-schooner creaked into Emerald Grove after dark on a moonlight night. In their anxiety to reach the town they had decided not to halt for supper at the usual hour, Daggett promising the children if they would wait that they should eat in a restaurant. They were now jubilant over this novel prospect. But the parents were quiet. The realization of their dream was too near at hand. Their old home lay but three miles away!

Emerald Grove! It was here that Lucy had bought her wedding-gown, and here that Daggett had bought his wedding suit. It was here that their childish eyes had first grown round with wonder at sight of a store, street-lamps, and a telephone. It was the promise of a trip to this town, on Saturday afternoon, that used to hold them faithful to their chores all week long. It was here the old doctor lived who had ushered them and their children into the world.

The town looked natural; but Daggett was surprised, and a little disappointed, at the number of new houses which had gone up. In his heart he was jealous of any change which had taken place in his absence. He wanted to come back to the Emerald Grove that he had left—a somnolent old town whose population had been at a standstill for a quarter of a century.

There were a number of new stores, too; and the restaurant to which Daggett took the family for supper had been improved and enlarged until he hardly recognized the place. It had also changed hands, so that he was denied the pleasure of shaking hands with Elihu James, the former proprietor. As he ate he watched the door for a familiar face, which he was hungrier for than the viands on his plate; but he could recall the name of none of the men who dropped in for a cigar. Emerald Grove *had* changed!

After supper they drove around to Joinville Haines's house. At least one of the hearts in the wagon fluttered as Daggett passed up the flower-bordered, brick walk to the old-fashioned dwelling. So much depended on Joinville Haines and his loyalty to an old friend! Then, in an ominously short time, Lucy heard her husband coming down the walk again. Trouble was in his footsteps.

"Joinville don't live here no more," said he, in a puzzled manner. "He's gone and built him a new house, the woman said. Don't it beat you that he would give the old family home the shake?"

His tone was almost an aggrieved one. During the weeks on the road he had so often stood, in imagination, on the steps of this house, and seen Joinville Haines open the door and start at the apparition of his old friend. Therefore, a strange woman answering his ring had stunned him. But this shock was small compared with the one he received when, following the woman's directions, he drove to a plot of ground that used to be rank with dog-fennel and jimson-weed and found a great, three-storied, granite mansion, with plate-glass windows, statuary in the yard, and a gravelled driveway and porte-cochère, all jealously guarded by an aristocratic ten-foot iron fence.

"This—this can't be Joinville's, Lucy!" he faltered.

But it was, so a white-capped maid informed him at the massive front door. Mr. Haines was not at home, she added, and would not be until the following day. Would he leave his card? Daggett shook his head and retreated in confusion. His card! He had never owned a card in his life, and the Joinville Haines he used to know never had, either.

"If we've got to camp again to-night, Rufus, let's drive out by the old place," pleaded Lucy, timidly. This great house, somehow, had frightened her. "I feel as if I'd sleep better out there. And I can't wait any longer to see it."

They were soon on the old familiar road, over which Daggett had hauled so many wagon-loads of corn and hogs and apples. They passed the long row of Lombardy poplars in front of Newton Bryson's, and crossed first Haymeadow Creek and then Possum Fork. From a distance they recognized in the moonlight the thicket of "silver maples" that had sprung from the roots of the two hoary old trees in Si Morgan's front yard. Then came Dick Helm's, Lucian Smith's, Nimrod Binney's, and all the other old neighbors. No change here, and it was not long before the scent of new-mown hay, still lying in windrows, and the notes of the whippoorwills had smoothed away the disappointments and alarms of Emerald Grove.

Finally they rumbled across the little bridge over Beecher's Run—still patched with the plank that Daggett had placed there with his own hands. From the summit of the rise just beyond, their old home would lie in full view—the house, the barn, the well-house, and, if the moonlight were bright enough, the clump of spruces under which two little white stones stood at the head of two little graves.

Daggett halted the mules at the foot of the slope.

"Let's camp here to-night, Lucy," said he, in a voice which sounded strange in his own ears. "We couldn't see much to-night, anyhow. And I'd sooner see it first by daylight. It'll look more natural."

So they camped there that night—camped, but did not sleep. All night long the woman lay in the wagon, listening to the frogs, and looking at the stars in the west—that west out of which they had fled as the children of Israel fled out of Egypt. And all night long the man under the wagon, out of the dew, lay with open eyes; and he too looked at the stars.

For some reason—the natural reaction following his high-strung anticipations, or the changes in Emerald Grove—he

was uneasy. And though the little frogs trilled and the crickets chirped just as they always used to do, something seemed to be amiss with the old nocturnal quietude of the place. All through the night there came to him, he fancied, a low, distant, regular, mysterious sound which he was at a loss to explain. When he rose to his elbow and listened, it seemed to cease; and he finally persuaded himself that it was only a ringing in his ears from indigestion. He had eaten a pretty hearty supper.

The elders were up at the gray of dawn, while the children still slept; but it was not until the sun had fairly risen that they proceeded slowly up the little rise of ground. Lucy reached out and took her husband's hand. He felt her trembling; and there flashed before him a day in their childhood when both of them, barefooted, had tramped up this selfsame little hill. She was trembling then, too, for she had seen a snake in the blackberry bushes.

They reached the top of the rise, and lifted their eyes. Both suddenly grew rigid. Then Lucy gave a little cry. Daggett stared vacantly ahead.

There was no farm! There was no cottage—no barn—no vine-clad well-house! All had been swept from the face of the earth as if by the besom of destruction. In their place were long, low, ugly brick buildings, with tin roofs; great tanks; tall towers of structural steel; a huge brick chimney, from which jetty smoke rolled forth; several rows of newly painted laborers' quarters; a railroad track and cars.

"Oil!" broke out Daggett, hoarsely, at last. "They've struck oil!"

Lucy, swaying dizzily, grasped his arm for support.

"Where's the little graveyard?" she whispered.

"I—I can't jest make out, I'm so turned around," he answered.

But he was not turned around to that extent. He had seen at the first glance that the ugly boiler-house, with the smoky cloud clustering about its tall stack like some foul fungus, squatted squarely over the little God's-acre in which the dust of their dead ones lay. It gave him a feeling of suffocation.

As they stood in stunned silence, a

carriage drawn by two spirited black horses, whose buckles glittered in the sunlight, rapidly approached. On the rear seat, behind a liveried coachman, sat Joinville Haines—a millionaire, but up and at work while most of his hired men still slept in the quarters below. In spite of his great house in Emerald Grove, and in spite of his fine equipage, he had changed little. He wore the same plain, ill-fitting clothes he had always worn, and beneath his squarely trimmed beard his shirt-front showed innocent of any cravat. He was only a little older, a little sadder, with deeper lines about his mouth.

At sight of the wayfarers, who, in their crushed mood, would have let him pass unhailed, he ordered the driver to stop.

"How do, Rufus! How do, Lucy!" said he, with his old quiet cordiality. He stepped down and held out his hand to each, after a characteristic motion which reminded Lucy of the days when he used to run a meat-market and always wiped his hand on his apron before offering it to any one. "When'd you git back?"

"Last night," answered Daggett. "We camped yander. We just come up to see the old place."

"Hadh't you heard?"

Daggett shook his head. A peculiar light, akin to pity, flamed up in the rich man's eyes, and then died away.

"You find consid'able change, then?"

"Joinville, we wanted to buy the old place back!" cried Lucy, swiftly.

Again that peculiar light in his eyes.

"Well, I guess you don't want it now, after I've sp'iled it for you. You wouldn't, leastways, if you'd had as much trouble with it as I have." He jerked his head toward his liveried coachman. "My wife makes me ride behind that monkey in red top-boots," he added, in a lowered voice. "But, Rufus, if you want a farm, I've got a hundred acres two miles down the road—the old Barnum place. It's better land than this ever was, and you can have it on easy terms."

"How much down?" asked Daggett, with a harsh laugh. He seemed to be joking, in a ghastly way.

"Whatever you can pay," answered the millionaire, steadily.

Daggett drew a couple of silver dollars and some small change from his trousers pocket.

"There's my pile, Join—what's left of my bird-dog."

Haines studied the coins in the horny palm for a moment.

"You have a penny there. Pay me that down." He did not smile, but gravely accepted the copper, wrote out a receipt for it, and signed a name that was good for at least a million dollars. "You can take possession this morning—there's no one on the place. I'll drop in this afternoon, and we'll inventory the stock and machinery."

The man and the woman stood side by side, without speech, until the carriage had passed out of sight.

"He *didn't* forget," said Daggett, with glistening eyes.

Lucy's lips parted, but closed again, soundlessly.